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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1401st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 1 June 1992, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea)

- Organization of work (A/AC.109/L.1776)

- Seminar away from Headquarters in connection with the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/AC.109/L.1776)

The CHAIRMAN: Members have before them document A/AC.109/L.1776 containing the report adopted by the open-ended Working Group at its 9th meeting on 28 May 1992.

The Working Group held nine arduous meetings to prepare this report which, in keeping with the mandate entrusted to it by the Special Committee, contains recommendations on how to improve further the efficiency of the work of the Committee in the light of recent developments, bearing in mind all suggestions made in the Fourth Committee and the plenary meetings of the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

Members will recall that a review process of our work in the field of decolonization was initiated last year, which led us, among other things, to combine the resolutions on 10 Territories into a single omnibus text, to which we shall refer from now on as the consolidated resolution. The efforts thus initiated continued throughout the year and culminated in the establishment of the open-ended Working Group.

At the beginning of our work, I appealed to all members of the Group for their collaboration and cooperation in performing the task assigned to them by the Special Committee. I am happy to say that they have all responded positively to this appeal.

Thanks to their very serious, dedicated and active participation in the work of the Group, members have been able to accomplish that important mission.

During the past few weeks, the Group had a fruitful exchange of views and prepared a set of recommendations which was adopted by consensus. As members know, the task, as set forth by the Special Committee when it decided to establish the open-ended Working Group, was to review a number of issues.

(The Chairman)

Among these issues were the revitalization of the Special Committee; the streamlining and consolidation of resolutions and other documents; the review of the work of the Committee, its agenda and list of Territories; and the cooperation of the administering Powers.

I hope that these recommendations, when adopted, will help the Committee to refocus its attention on the remaining Territories and will provide renewed impetus to our work.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that the task ahead will require the cooperation of all concerned, in particular the administering Powers.

We have made efforts to rationalize and revitalize our work and we expect the administering Powers to extend renewed cooperation to the Committee.

Since the membership of the Working Group and the Special Committee is the same, and since all paragraphs were discussed at length in the Working Group, I suggest that we consider the report as a whole.

I should like first to draw the attention of members to a typographical error in paragraph 9, second line, where the word "resolution" should be in the plural, "resolutions".

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) (interpretation from French): My comments may concern only the French translation.

I refer first to paragraph 10 of the draft report, whose second sentence begins with the words "It also considers that"; we learn that the Working Group considers that the activities of foreign economic interests are not an obstacle to the process of self-determination. But in the same sentence this view is attributed to representatives of Territories and some members of the Working Group. I think this is a twofold attribution. We could save space by deleting the words "It also considers that" at the beginning of the sentence because these are statements attributed to certain members of the Committee and representatives of certain Territories.

I therefore suggest that instead of starting the sentence with the words "It also considers that" we say "Certain members as well as representatives of Territories believed that, while the Territories in the Caribbean, Pacific and other regions might have problems related to the activities of foreign economic and other interests, such activities do not necessarily impede the process of self-determination". The idea would then be attributed to certain members and representatives of Territories.

Paragraph 12 states:

> "The Working Group notes that the question of name-calling is one of the most controversial issues dividing the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee."

Our understanding of that sentence, and particularly the latter part, is that the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee are opposed over the interpretation of "name-calling". However, we also understand that it is Member States in the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee that are divided on the interpretation and use of "name-calling" in draft resolutions.

(Mr. Diarra, Mali)

So I suggest that the last part of that sentence be amended to read: "one of the most controversial issues dividing Member States within the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee".

Finally, when we adopted the draft report the quotation attributed to the United States in paragraph 18 was in inverted commas, but in the final version they have been dropped. I do not know whether it is a practice of the Secretariat to drop the quotation marks or whether it is an omission.

The CHAIRMAN: The points made by the representative of Mali have been noted, but I request the Secretary of the Committee to respond to some of them now.

Mr. DE SOUZA (Secretary of the Committee) (interpretation from French): The text that was given to the translators was in English. Hence, at the Secretariat level, with regard to matters of substance, we can only answer for the English text.

With regard to the comments that have just been made about the French text, and in particular paragraph 18, I would say that that goes beyond a question of language - whether French, English and so on; in fact, a question of principle is involved. I recall that at one of our previous meetings one delegation questioned the fact that we were quoting points made in an informal group, and at the time it was said we could not refer to them as both quotations from an informal group and from the Fourth Committee. I think that at the time the Working Group left it up to the Secretariat to check on the exact situation, and having checked on it we realized it was correct, that indeed that statement had been made in an informal meeting, and it had even been incorporated into an informal paper distributed by an administering Power during last year's work of the Fourth Committee.

(Mr. De Souza, Secretary of the Committee)

We were therefore unable to verify whether the entire quotation had in fact been reproduced in the Fourth Committee documents, since that Committee has no verbatim record but only summary records. We were able to ascertain that aproximately the same phrase had been said in the Fourth Committee, but since it was only in a summary record it was difficult for us to reproduce it here as an exact quotation. Hence, in agreement with the Editorial Service, we decided to omit the quotation marks while retaining the idea expressed.

With regard to the other points raised and to the other paragraphs to which reference was made, I think that they should be transmitted to the Translation Services, which will, I am sure, take the appropriate action.

Mr. MONGELLA (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation would like to have some clarification in order better to understand the issue raised in connection with paragraph 10 of the report and how it is to be handled. If I understood the interpretation correctly, the sentence will be substantially changed.

As I recall, my delegation had raised a question with regard to this particular sentence because we felt that it did not reflect a balanced position of existing views on the question, namely, that there are a number of delegations that hold the view that some of the foreign economic activities and other interests do impede the process of self-determination, while others, as the report rightly states, have expressed the view that some of those activities do not. In my delegation's view the balance between those two positions was somewhat obscured by the way in which the sentence has been written. We had thought about raising this issue earlier on but decided perhaps, for the sake of consensus, we could live with this skewed phraseology.

(Mr. Mongella, United Republic of Tanzania)

Now, it may be that I have not understood the interpretation of the proposal made by the representative who has just spoken on this particular question, and my delegation would thus request some clarification as to exactly how the sentence is to be worded before taking a position on it.

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) (interpretation from French): My statement was not intended to challenge in any way the substance of the sentence. I was merely drawing attention to a drafting matter: in the French version, the second sentence, in English, begins with the words "It also considers that", and I do not see the link between the content of the sentence and the Working Group. After this first part of the sentence, the active subject is really some members and representatives of Territories, so I was suggesting that either we say it is the idea of the Working Group, deleting the reference to "some members and representatives of Territories", or we delete the words "It also considers that" and attribute the idea to "Some members as well as representatives of Territories".

I was not in any way challenging the idea behind the sentence, but only seeking to give it its proper form. I have not read the English text and I do not know if what I am suggesting has a bearing on that text, but the paragraph itself was the result of concessions on all sides. This in no way prejudges the position my delegation might have on the substance of the matter.

The CHAIRMAN: May I ask the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania if he has any difficulties with the English version of paragraph 10?

Mr. MONGELLA (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation, as I stated earlier on, does have difficulties with this sentence, but we have decided to live with it for the moment.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania for his continued cooperation. I suggest that, since the open-ended Working Group has been working in English, and that the language of the paragraph has already been agreed to, we request a revision of the French translation to arrive at a more accurate representation of the English text. I understand that the representative of Mali agrees to that, and I shall therefore consider that the problem has been solved.

Mr. ZHANG Yan (China) (interpretation from Chinese): Representatives of other delegations have mentioned some problems with regard to the Spanish and French translations of the document before us. I had not intended to speak now, but I have discovered a rather major mistake in the Chinese translation. Therefore, I should like to bring it to the attention of the Secretariat so that it may duly correct it in its later distribution.

The problem is with part 4, paragraph 12. In English it says "name-calling". It is our suggestion that this can be translated directly into Chinese in accordance with its English idiomatic meaning, because we have a corresponding phrase for it in Chinese. However, the Chinese translation here is very misleading and the implication very serious. Hence, we bring it to the attention of the Secretariat so that the persons concerned can be informed that this mistake should be corrected. If necessary, the Chinese delegation will get in touch with those concerned.

The CHAIRMAN: The point made by the representative of China will be taken into account, and the Secretariat is therefore requested to take the appropriate and necessary action to correct the mistake.

If there are no additional comments or objections, may I take it that the Special Committee adopts the report (A/AC.109/L.1776) of the open-ended Working Group by consensus?

The report was adopted.

Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, for your work in connection with the preparation of the report of the Working Group. I have in mind especially your role as author - I assume in close cooperation with the Secretariat - of the original version of the document you submitted to the Group at the end of

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

April. May I state very clearly that the version that was distributed at that time, as an unofficial document under the symbol C.24/WG/CRP.1, was warmly welcomed by the relevant authorities of my Government. Unfortunately, I must also say, with the same openness, that in view of the debates in the Group, the final document we have just adopted lost much of its original value. Some excellent proposals and recommendations reflecting the voices and opinions of a large number of States Members of the United Nations that were put forward during recent years have now disappeared, while others lacking in any value have been added, some of which are scarcely understandable to my delegation.

We are not happy with the numerous changes that were made in the text of the report before its approval, but we are particularly opposed to paragraph 9, which refers to apartheid, and recommends that the Special Committee continue to prepare conclusions and recommendations on the situation in South Africa. Nevertheless, my delegation does see some progress - albeit very limited - as well as the possibility of the Committee's making some progress in its work this year.

For those reasons, I wish to put on record that my delegation did not participate in the adoption of the report of the open-ended Working Group contained in document A/AC.109/L.1776.

Mr. DZAKHAYEV (Russian Federation) (interpretation from Russian): First of all, the Russian delegation would like to note your role, Sir, as Chairman of the Working Group. This certainly helped us to reach agreement on the report we have just adopted.

Our delegation would like to emphasize that certain positive shifts have been achieved in the work of the Committee of 24, as a result of collective and constructive efforts, including those made during the deliberations of the

(Mr. Dzakhayev, Russian Federation)

Working Group. However, this is just the first stage, and we believe that it is necessary - and possible - to step up our work. The report confirms this once again.

In the view of our delegation the time has come to delete from the resolutions and decisions adopted by our Committee each year those which are not relevant to the realities of the world today and artificially increase the spirit of confrontation. In this connection, the Russian delegation supported, inter alia, the proposal contained in the original version of the draft report of the Working Group which was prepared by you, Sir, whereby the question of military activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories would not be considered as a separate item on the agenda, and references to such activities would be confined to those Territories where such military bases and facilities exist.

We also consider it inadvisable to include in decisions adopted by our Committee provisions relating to apartheid, South Africa and any other matters which are unrelated to the Committee's mandate. In our opinion, we might even consider the advisability of taking up some of the problems now on the Committee's agenda only on a biennial basis, that is, every two years.

The Russian delegation believes in a constructive interaction between the Committee of 24 and the administering Powers in order to ensure their active participation in the Committee's work, something which would be in the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Without such cooperation, the Committee's work might stray from the true realities facing the peoples of the colonial Territories and get into a political and ideological discussion, and that would certainly make it harder for decisions to be taken in the true interests of those Territories.

(Mr. Dzakhayev, Russian Federation)

The main guideline for the work of the decolonization bodies, in our opinion, should be a general desire to ensure the full development of the potential of the United Nations, so that it can assist the peoples in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in exercising their right to self-determination and freedom of choice, taking into account the great variety of social, economic and political levels and forms of development.

The Russian delegation is willing to cooperate fully in attaining these goals.

Mr. MONGELLA (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation also would like, Sir, to express its appreciation for your chairmanship and guidance in the work of the Working Group. It is a source of satisfaction to us that the document we have adopted has taken into consideration and has based itself on most of the resolutions that have been adopted, either by consensus or by the majority of the Member States. We are gratified that, under your wise guidance, the Working Group has come up with a balanced and forward-looking document.

My delegation understands very well the expectations of the international community regarding the ongoing process of change in southern Africa. We are very conscious of developments and are following them very closely. Like all peace-loving people worldwide, we expect that the process will lead to a genuine democratic transformation of the political situation in South Africa.

As my delegation mentioned earlier on, the people who are in the best position to tell us exactly what is happening in South Africa are the majority of the South African population: to us they are the genuine representatives. It was based on that wisdom, I think, that the Working Group heard statements from the African National Congress of South Africa and the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania on this particular question and, based on its clear and conscious judgement, decided, quite correctly, that the question of apartheid should continue to be considered by this Committee. We think that the granting of political rights to the majority of South Africans should be the guiding principle in the decision regarding that question.

In that light, my delegation regards this text as a step in the right direction; we are confident that it will serve as a rallying point to bridge the gap between the contending positions of the members of the Special Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Committee and the Secretariat, and the other Members of the United Nations who have facilitated the work of the open-ended Working Group, and also the work of this Committee. I believe that developments in South Africa and the small Territories impose an important task on this Committee: For the sake of the peoples in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, we must "produce the goods".

With your cooperation, this report has been adopted. I look forward to your close cooperation in the further execution of the important decisions that have been made.

SEMINAR AWAY FROM HEADQUARTERS IN CONNECTION WITH THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to bring to the attention of the Committee the regional seminar in Grenada this month. The Chairmen of the Committee and the Subcommittee will be attending that seminar, as it is directly related to their work. However, I am happy to announce that, in order to have a balanced, regional representation of the Committee, the delegations of Cuba, the Russian Federation, Mali and Fiji have agreed to coordinate with regional members of the Committee so that we may have an additional six members attending the seminar in Grenada.

I would request that the coordinators advise the Committee Secretary of the names of the delegations that will represent the various regional groups represented here in the Committee. The sooner that is communicated,

(The Chairman)

the easier it will be for us to make arrangements for this seminar, which will be held from 17 to 19 June.

I should also like to note that there will be a similar regional seminar in the Pacific in 1993, at about the same time of the year, and that members who are not attending this seminar will be able to participate in that one.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.